THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

STAFF REPORT

Council Meeting Date: June 9, 2020

Subject: Draft I-26 Connector Project Aesthetics Committee Report: Phase 1 - Vertical Aesthetic Treatments

Staff Resource(s): Ken Putnam, PE, Transportation Department Director

Action Requested: Receive the draft I-26 Connector Project Aesthetics Committee Report: Phase 1 - Vertical Aesthetic Treatments and provide appropriate comments and feedback to help the Aesthetics Committee with their ongoing work.

Background:

- City Council approved a motion to establish the I-26 Connector Project Aesthetics Committee on April 24, 2018.
- City Council approved the initial committee members on July 24, 2018 via Resolution # 18-192.
- The first Aesthetics Committee meeting was held on October 3, 2018 and they currently meet every two weeks.
- The Aesthetics Committee recommendations are being developed in two phases.
    1. Phase 1 - Vertical Aesthetics Treatments (structural aspects, subject report).
    2. Phase 2 - Horizontal Aesthetics Treatments (horizontal, primarily landscaping, aspects, will begin shortly). A project budget of 1% to 1 ½% of the construction budget for each section is typically set up for horizontal aesthetics treatments so there should be no fiscal impact for the City.
- The report is labeled “draft” because some issues affecting the recommendations remain unresolved and some cost information is incomplete.
- The I-26 Connector project number is identified as I-2513. The current final design / construction phases for the four separate sections are listed below.
    1. I-2513A - June 2022
    2. I-2513B - June 2021
    3. I-2513C - June 2025
    4. I-2513D - June 2021
- The I-26 Connector project will be constructed using a design-build process.
- Separate from the Aesthetics Committee recommendations, the Transportation Department staff identified infrastructure type improvements (betterments) including sidewalks, multi-use transportation paths, bicycle lanes, and replacing two existing pedestrian bridges.
- City Council will need to review and approve a design-build agreement with betterments between the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and the City at a later date including the estimated costs that the City would be responsible for.
- By receiving the I-26 Connector project Aesthetics Committee’s Phase-1 report, City Council is not agreeing to implement all recommended aesthetic treatments discussed in the report, but rather is committing to using the report to help inform future conversations and negotiations between the City and NCDOT in relation to the I-26 connector project.
- The estimated costs included in the subject agreement would have to be submitted with the partially signed agreement (Staff is appealing that decision with NCDOT).

Council Goal(s):

- Transportation and Accessibility.

Committee(s):

- None

Pro(s):
- Once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to enhance the appearance of a major City gateway.
- Provides multi-use transportation (greenway) network connecting downtown Asheville and West Asheville across the Jeff Bowen bridges.

Con(s):
- City's cost share for enhanced Vertical Aesthetics Treatments recommendations.

Fiscal Impact:
- Cost estimates vary for the vertical aesthetic treatments. If the standard agreed upon treatments were approved, there would be no cost to the City. Cost estimates for vertical aesthetic treatments that exceed the standard agreed upon treatments range from $6,200,000 to $9,800,000. There is currently no funding included in the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for vertical aesthetic treatments.
- There is, however, $2,000,000 currently programmed in the City's CIP to fund the City's share of the cost for betterments identified by the Transportation Department staff. The City's share of the betterment costs would be $1,700,000 which is 17% of the total cost for betterments and the NCDOT would be responsible for the rest of the cost.

Suggested Action:
- Receive the draft I-26 Connector Project Aesthetics Committee Report: Phase 1 - Vertical Aesthetic Treatments and provide appropriate comments and feedback to help the Aesthetics Committee with their ongoing work.

Attachment(s)
- Aesthetics Committee Cover Letter
- Aesthetics Committee Report
- Map Sections